“Yesterday”: The Mystery of a Musical Masterpiece

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Abstract

This article offers a philosophical, metaphysical, and hermeneutic reading of The Beatles’ song *“Yesterday.”* Employing elements of archetypal and linguistic hermeneutics, the author explores the deeper meaning of the song’s title, interpreting it as the formula “the erased Day-Yes” — a symbol of humanity’s lost wholeness. *Yesterday* is understood not as simple nostalgia, but as a musical-metaphysical archetype of the Golden Age and the inner Light, awakening the soul’s memory of its eternal origin. By integrating musical, philosophical, and mythological perspectives, the study positions the song as a phenomenon of cultural memory and a contemporary expression of Platonic anamnesis.

Keywords: Yesterday, The Beatles, music, archetype, philosophy, metaphysics, hermeneutics, Golden Age, memory, wholeness, culture

Philosophical Significance

The article uncovers the archetypal dimension of musical memory as a pathway to existential self-knowledge. Through the example of *Yesterday*, it demonstrates how music can awaken the soul’s remembrance of its eternal origin and the lost unity of human being.

“Music is the mediator between the spiritual and sensual life.” – Ludwig van Beethoven

1. Introduction: A Song Breathing Eternity

Some songs seem to exist beyond time. They resonate as if the soul itself is ringing, revealing something primordial, lost yet alive. One such song is The Beatles’ *Yesterday*. Its melody seems woven from light and melancholy, a purity that cannot be reclaimed but can be remembered.

Why does this simple song quicken the heart and fill the soul with a luminous, almost childlike longing? The answer lies in its timeless essence. *Yesterday* is not about the mundane “yesterday.” It speaks of the eternal Past, the Golden Age — the *Satya Yuga* of ancient India, the root-time of earthly civilization, a source beyond temporal flow. It is not a bygone past but the Past as eternal Now. The river flows because its source — Yes — persists.

1.1 Methodological Basis

This study departs from conventional hermeneutics, rooting itself in an ontological understanding of language akin to Martin Heidegger’s thought: “Language is the house of Being.” Language is not merely descriptive; it is a living window into Being, through which the world speaks itself.

The author employs an original method of **ontological-musical hermeneutics**, treating word and sound as phenomena of Being, carrying the primordial meaning of creation. This approach merges ontological, archetypal, and musical-hermeneutic perspectives to reveal the intrinsic link between Word and Melody as forms of existential self-knowledge. Such integration resonates with Ken Wilber's integral consciousness model, where diverse modes of knowing — from the bodily to the spiritual — manifest the same field of Being [1].

Words are understood not as discrete units but as living organisms, where the root is inseparable from the whole, the tree in its fullness. This vision allows the discovery of life's internal morphology, where sound, meaning, and image form a unified metaphysical fabric. The researcher, in this approach, becomes not merely an interpreter but a witness to the revelation of meaning expressed through language.

2. The Secret of the Word "Yesterday"

To a sensitive ear, the word itself reveals a hidden truth, perhaps unknown even to McCartney: *Yes-ster-day*. This tri-partite division encodes an ancient formula of existential roots:

- **Yes** — the primordial affirmation of the soul with Life, the universe, and God. It is the breath of Being, the pure acceptance that generates Light.
- **Ster** — echoing English *to stir* ("to disturb") and resonating with *sterile* ("lifeless"), representing loss, erasure, the obscuring of the heavenly Yes — God as Life within us.
- **Day** — Light, the manifestation of Truth, a gift to those living.

Thus, *Yesterday* becomes a formula:
Yes-ster-day = Erased Day-Yes

A Day of Light within us, obscured by darkness. A Day of Eternity, a Myth-Moment hidden within time. A Day-Life submerged beneath the centuries, like a soul within the body.

3. Music as the Voice of Memory

When we listen to *Yesterday*, we feel more than nostalgia. We yearn for the inner Day when humanity could say "Yes" to the World — when word and feeling coincided. Life then required no proof; it was revelation itself.

The melody does not narrate history; it resurrects memory. It sings quietly inside us: *"Remember: you were Light. And in the secret of your eyes, you remain Light."*

4. The Age That Has Not Passed

Every human carries memory of Paradise — not as a place, but as the realm of the Spirit: wholeness, innocence, purity. Plato called it *anamnesis*, the soul's awakening to what it knew before embodiment [2]. This is not memory of events but memory of Being.

Here, *yesterday* symbolizes lost wholeness sought within, not without. Mystics called it Divine Childhood. When McCartney sings, “Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away…,” it is not about personal past but about the singular First Reality, where all breathed joy, where all was Yes.

Barry Miles observes that the song’s structure itself acts as a dialogue between memory and the Eternal Now: the minor key evokes “the memory of what is absent” [3]. A musical equivalent of Platonic recollection — longing not for the gone, but for the Unchanging — that which always was and is in us, effaced by time like words in sand. The Golden Age is not poetic fancy but the original Unity of humanity, when Light and Life were inseparable.

In that age, the Moon was the Gateway to Eternity, Source and Mother of all, in unity with Earth — no boundary between Heaven and world. Humanity lived in light, and light lived in humanity. The Fall, giving rise to history and temporal flow, began when the Moon separated from Earth. Being without her became Time — a shadow of Truth, Amen — and the Age of Ages contracted to a point, a spark of the soul [4].

The ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead* (1895, ed. E.A. Wallis Budge) echoes this return to the hidden Day, not death, but eternal Life. The soul strives to “remember its name” and thus gain immortality, echoing Platonic anamnesis [5]. In literature, John B. Priestley portrays the same Day as the Lunar Day — the Day of Love as the Other, where heart and Light are one [6].

5. Eternal Light

Humanity experiences the same existential journey: the fall from Light into darkness, from Yes into No, from Being into mere survival. *Yesterday* is not a lyrical ballad but a cry for the return of Light, the lost Yes. Its melody breathes the world’s desire to remember itself. When McCartney sings, “Why she had to go, I don’t know, she wouldn’t say…,” it is not a solitary voice but humanity calling to its eternal home.

Listeners feel a shared bittersweet longing, tempered by hope. Tears from *Yesterday* are tears of a soul glimpsing its Source. The song invites awakening, not mere remembrance. Time seems to pause, and the ancient Yes — primordial, genuine, living — resonates. A moment of recognition: *“Here it is — my Day! I remember it!”*

Yesterday is not “before”; it is “always.”

6. Conclusion

True creators seldom grasp the depth of their own creation. When a masterpiece emerges, it is often not merely the fruit of talent or emotion. Eternity speaks through the creator; the artist’s hand becomes a string of universal Silence resonating in the world.

God moves through the poet, musician, and painter. Humanity, made in God's image, continues Creation in its acts. All that arises from love and purity roots in the Eternal and, nourished by it, does not perish. McCartney, presenting *Yesterday*, was touched by Eternity itself, permitted to hear its breath and record it in musical notation. *Yesterday* is a reminder: God, the Root of beings, works through humans — returning the soul to its lost Day.

7. Academic Relevance and Research Prospects

This study aligns with contemporary ontological and hermeneutic philosophy of language and is suitable for leading journals exploring interdisciplinary dialogues between philosophy, philology, and metaphysics.

It opens avenues for further research in ontological-hermeneutic and ontomusical analysis of language, viewing the word as a quantum of Being and an expression of Creative Intent. Future developments may explore archetypal speech structures, musical codes of consciousness, and their roles in shaping human existential experience.

References

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